

1 **CLAIMS**

2 1. A method for broadcasting an announcement signal, comprising:
3 broadcasting a network identifier signal that uniquely identifies a computer
4 network;

5 broadcasting an authorizer signal that identifies an authorizer network
6 address on the computer network, the authorizer network address being associated
7 with an authorizer that is configured to authorize mobile clients to utilize the
8 computer network; and

9 broadcasting a verifier signal that identifies a verifier network address on
10 the computer network, the verifier network address being associated with a verifier
11 that is configured to verify data packets sent by mobile clients utilizing the
12 computer network.

13
14 2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein each signal is broadcast
15 periodically.

16
17 3. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the network identifier
18 signal, the authorizer signal and the verifier signal are broadcast together in an
19 announcer signal.

20
21 4. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the authorizer network
22 address and the verifier network address are Internet Protocol (IP) addresses.

1 5. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the verifier is preferred
2 verifier, and the method further comprises substituting a network address of an
3 alternate verifier for the network address of the preferred verifier.

4
5 6. The method as recited in claim 5, further comprising determining if
6 the preferred verifier has reached a load threshold, and wherein the substituting is
7 performed if the load threshold is reached.

8
9 7. The method as recited in claim 5, further comprising detecting a
10 preferred verifier failure, and wherein the substituting is performed if the preferred
11 verifier fails.

12
13 8. A method for accessing a computer network, comprising:
14 detecting an announcer signal that identifies a computer network address of
15 an authorizer in the computer network, the authorizer being configured to
16 authorize user access to the computer network;
17 accessing the authorizer;
18 receiving authorization from the authorizer to access the computer network;
19 and
20 accessing the computer network.

21
22 9. The method as recited in claim 8, further comprising storing current
23 network settings prior to accessing the computer network.

1 **10.** The method as recited in claim 8, further comprising:
2 storing current network settings prior to accessing the computer network;
3 terminating access to the computer network; and
4 restoring the saved network settings as current network settings after
5 terminating access to the computer network.

6

7 **11.** The method as recited in claim 8, wherein the announcement signal
8 further comprises a network identifier signal that identifies the computer network.

9

10 **12.** The method as recited in claim 8, wherein the receiving
11 authorization further comprises receiving an authorization key from the authorizer
12 to create a tag to attach to each of a plurality of data packets transmitted to the
13 computer network.

14

15 **13.** The method as recited in claim 8, wherein the accessing the
16 computer network further comprises attaching a tag created with an authorization
17 key to data packets transmitted to the computer network, the tag allowing the data
18 to be accepted by the computer network.

19

20 **14.** The method as recited in claim 13, wherein a session time is
21 associated with the authorization key and the authorization key is only valid if the
22 session time has not expired.

1 **15.** The method as recited in claim 13, further comprising encrypting
2 the authorization key.

3
4 **16.** The method as recited in claim 13, further comprising encrypting at
5 least a portion of the tag.

6
7 **17.** The method as recited in claim 8, wherein:

8 the announcer signal further identifies a computer network address of a
9 verifier in the computer network that is configured to verify that a communication
10 to the computer network are from a user that has been authorized to access the
11 computer network;

12 the receiving authorization further comprises receiving an authorization key
13 from the authorizer; and

14 the accessing the computer network further comprises transmitting key-
15 tagged data packets to the computer network through the verifier.

16
17 **18.** The method as recited in claim 8, wherein the detecting further
18 comprises continuously monitoring to detect the announcement signal.

1 **19.** One or more computer-readable media containing computer-
2 executable instructions that, when executed on a computer, perform the following
3 steps:

4 transmitting a network identifier signal that identifies an associated
5 network;

6 transmitting an authorizer signal that identifies an authorizer on the
7 network, the authorizer being configured to authorize client access to the network;
8 and

9 transmitting a verifier signal that identifies a verifier, the verifier being
10 configured to verify that data packets transmitted to the network are transmitted
11 from clients that have been authorized to access the network.

12
13 **20.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 19,
14 wherein the network identifier signal, the authorizer signal and the verifier signal
15 are transmitted together as an announcer signal.

16
17 **21.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 19,
18 wherein the verifier signal further comprises a network address for the verifier.

19
20 **22.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 19,
21 wherein the authorizer signal further comprises a network address for the
22 authorizer.

1 **23.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 19,
2 wherein the verifier is a preferred verifier, and wherein the computer-executable
3 instructions further include computer-executable instructions that, when executed
4 on a computer, perform the additional step of changing the verifier signal to
5 identify an alternate verifier.

6

7 **24.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23,
8 wherein the verifier signal is changed to identify the alternate verifier if the
9 preferred verifier fails.

10

11 **25.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 23,
12 wherein the verifier signal is changed to identify the alternate verifier when a load
13 threshold is reached by the preferred verifier, the load threshold being the highest
14 rate of use that is acceptable for the preferred verifier.

15

16 **26.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 19,
17 wherein the network identifier signal, the authorizer signal and the verifier signal
18 are transmitted periodically.

1 **27.** One or more computer-readable media containing computer-
2 executable instructions that, when executed on a computer, perform the following
3 steps:

4 detecting a wireless announcer signal that identifies a wireless computer
5 network and an authorizer on the wireless computer network;

6 contacting the authorizer to obtain authorization to access the wireless
7 computer network; and

8 communicating with the wireless computer network.

9
10 **28.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 27,
11 further comprising saving current network settings prior to communicating with
12 the wireless computer network.

13
14 **29.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 28,
15 further comprising:

16 disconnecting from the wireless computer network; and

17 restoring the saved network settings.

1 **30.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 27,
2 wherein:

3 the wireless announcer signal further identifies a verifier on the wireless
4 computer network, the verifier being configured to verify authorization to use the
5 wireless computer network; and

6 the communicating with the wireless computer network further comprises
7 transmitting one or more data packets to the wireless computer network through
8 the verifier.

9
10 **31.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 27,
11 wherein the communicating with the network further comprises transmitting one
12 or more data packets to the wireless computer network, the one or more computer-
13 readable media further comprising computer-executable instructions to perform
14 the following steps:

15 obtaining an authorization key from the authorizer, the authorization key
16 indicating authorization to connect to the wireless computer network; and

17 appending a tag created with the authorization key to each data packet
18 transmitted to the wireless computer network.

1 **32.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 31,
2 wherein:

3 the wireless computer network further comprises a verifier that receives
4 data packets transmitted to the wireless computer network and verifies that each
5 data packet has a valid tag appended thereto; and

6 the communicating with the wireless computer network further comprises
7 transmitting data packets to the verifier for acceptance to the wireless computer
8 network.

9
10 **33.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 31,
11 further comprising encrypting the authorization key.

12
13 **34.** The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 31,
14 further comprising encrypting at least a portion of the tag.

15
16 **35.** A method, comprising:

17 detecting a first announcer signal in a first location, the first announcer
18 signal identifying a network, an authorizer on the network and a first verifier on
19 the network;

20 obtaining an authorization key from the authorizer;

21 transmitting data packets to the network through the first verifier, each data
22 packet having a tag created with the authorization key included therewith;

23 detecting a second announcer signal in a second location, the second
24 announcer signal identifying the network and a second verifier on the network;
25 and

transmitting data packets to the network through the second verifier, each data packet having the tag included therewith.

36. The method as recited in claim 35, wherein:

the authorization key includes an indication of a valid time period; and the data packets are transmitted during the valid time period.

37. The method as recited in claim 35, further comprising encrypting at least a portion of the tag.

38. An system, comprising:

a network identifier;

an authorizer identifier;

a verifier identifier;

a signal generator configured to generate a signal that communicates the network identifier, the authorizer identifier and the verifier identifier.

39. The system as recited in claim 38, further comprising memory that stores the network identifier, the authorizer identifier and the verifier identifier.

40. The system as recited in claim 38, further comprising a receiver configured to accept the network identifier, the authorizer identifier and the verifier identifier as input data.

1 **41.** A system, comprising:

2 a detector configured to detect and receive a broadcast signal;

3 a web browser configured to access and communicate with a computer
4 network by transmitting one or more data packets to a verifier on the computer
5 network;

6 a controller configured to activate the detector to monitor for a broadcast
7 signal from a network, the broadcast signal including a network address for the
8 verifier and a network address for an authorizer that controls access to the
9 computer network;

10 a tagging module configured to attach a tag created with an authorization
11 key to each of the one or more data packets; and

12 wherein upon receipt of the broadcast signal, the controller directs the web
13 browser to contact the authorizer to acquire an authorization key that allows the
14 web browser to access the network by transmitting tagged data packets to the
15 verifier.

16

17 **42.** The system as recited in claim 41, further comprising an encryption
18 module configured to encrypt at least a portion of the tag prior to transmitting the
19 key-tagged data packets to the verifier.

20

21 **43.** The system as recited in claim 41, wherein the computer network is
22 a first computer network, the system further comprising:

23 second network settings associated with a second computer network; and

24 a network settings module configured to store the second network settings
25 prior to accessing the first computer network.

1 **44.** The system as recited in claim 43, wherein:

2 the web browser is further configured to disconnect from the first computer
3 network; and

4 the network settings module is further configured to restore the second
5 network settings when the web browser disconnects from the first computer
6 network.